

A Book of the Week.

IN KING'S BYWAYS.*

One of the London "dailies" stated, last week, that there was a decided "slump" in short stories; that is to say, in the sale of volumes of short stories.

That this should be so was inevitable, and must have been foreseen by anyone who looked ahead. Kipling rose above the horizon, a master Impressionist. He made his reputation on the short story, because he had the wonderful, inexplicable faculty of seizing his points, making them, and leaving all the rest. Each of his triumphs was more than a story; it was the embodiment of an idea. His imitators have fared as badly as the imitators of the Whistler school have done in painting. It seemed easy to reproduce what looked like deliberate carelessness. It is not always at once obvious that to be careless successfully one has to be the most careful, the most expert craftsman in the world.

Well! The fashion was set, and for years we have lived on snippets. Now the taste has begun to pall. Miss Fowler was the first big name to come a notorious "cropper." Her volume of short stories showed her limits in a vexatious way, and her admirers would have none of it. And now Mr. Weyman shows us that, though there is not one ounce of slipshod work in the whole of his present volume, yet the short story is not the right vehicle for his genius.

Almost every one of the episodes he gives us is too big for its setting. He opens half-shut doors, giving us a glimpse within of human lives full of interest; then the shutter swiftly closes; we are left outside in the dark, tantalised beyond bearing with the wonder as to what became of them—what happened next. He might have called his volume "Notes for Novels," for there is hardly one story that might not be expanded indefinitely, in that world of infinite possibilities to which he always gives us access.

But we must not be ungrateful. After all, he is still Stanley Weyman, and we take with thanks whatever he gives. The grim Paris of vice and intrigue, brilliancy and treachery, lives before us in such graphic flashes as "Crillon's Stake." The comedy of "Flore" is excellent, and so is the unexpected dénouement of the "Episode of the Fowl in the Pot," and the "Episode of the Snowball."

"A Daughter of the Gironde" is perhaps the one that falls most notably below the writer's usual standard; one can imagine how, in a longer story, the hand that produced "Count Hannibal" would have evolved for us the characters of Corinne and Honoré de Bercy. But the limits of the present tale do not allow of this.

There is one story in the collection—the "Episode of the Boxwood Fire"—which gives a good idea of the way in which, in the France of those days, the wary watched every word which dropped from the lips of every man they came in contact with.

An old Jesuit priest, one to whom the Duc de Sully has done a small service, comes to pay him a visit. In the course of some very trifling conversation, which makes the Duc wonder why he came, he ventures to hope that the air of Fontainebleau agrees with the King. The Duc corrects him; the King is at Chantilly, not Fontainebleau.

* By Stanley Weyman. Smith, Elder and Co.

"Ah, to be sure," says the Jesuit, "I had forgotten"; and he rises to go, but pauses for a moment to admire the brilliant fire in the grate. "It burns so brightly, it must be of boxwood," he says.

"Of boxwood?" exclaims Sully, astonished.

"Ay, is it not?" he answered, looking at me with much simplicity.

The reader must turn to the book to ascertain how, out of these two slender hints, a conspiracy against the King's life is discovered and foiled. G. M. R.

At the Gate.

What will you pluck in Love's garden,
Honesty and rue?

Or love-in-a-mist by the twilight kist,
Or heart's-ease wet with dew,
Heart's-ease with tears of dew?

There's rosemary in Love's garden,
But that remembrance brings.

There are roses red, in a hidden bed,
With petals curved like wings,
Red petals like Love's wings.

There is fair store in Love's garden
Of herbs to heal and bless,

But the fairest vail is poppies pale
That bring forgetfulness,
Sleep and forgetfulness.

E. C.

—Westminster Gazette.

What to Read.

"John Wesley's Journal": Abridged by Percy Livingstone Parker. With an Introduction by Hugh Price Hughes, M.A., and an Appreciation of the Journal by Augustine Birrell, K.C.

"The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses." By Theodore Roosevelt.

"The Black Police of Queensland: Reminiscences of Official Work and Personal Adventures in the Early Days of the Colony." By Edward B. Kennedy.

"Andrew Carnegie: From Telegraph Boy to Millionaire." By Bernard Alderson.

"Love and The Soul Hunters." By John Oliver Hobbes.

"Lazarre." By Mary Hartwell Catherwood.

"The Autobiography of a 'Newspaper Girl.'" By Miss Elizabeth L. Banks.

"Three Men." By Maxim Gorky. The English Translation of "The Trio," universally pronounced by critics to be the finest production of Gorky's extraordinary genius.

"Such as Have Erred." By Ella MacMahon.

Coming Events.

October 1st.—Opening of the Medical Schools. The Lord Mayor distributes prizes and medals at Guy's Hospital, 3 p.m.

October 2nd.—Meeting of St. John's House Debating Society, St. John's House, Norfolk Street, Strand, 7 p.m.

October 11th.—Meeting of the Executive Committee of the League of St. John's House Nurses, at St. John's House, 2.30 p.m.

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